

REMARKS

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the very thorough consideration given the present application.

Claims 1 and 4-11 are now present in this application. Claim 1 is independent.

Claims 2 and 3 have been canceled, and claim 1 has been amended. Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

I. Priority Under 35 U.S.C. § 119

Applicant thanks the Examiner for acknowledging Applicant's claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119, and receipt of the certified priority document.

II. Drawings

The Office Action indicates that the drawings are accepted by the Examiner. Since no objection has been received, Applicant assumes that the drawings are acceptable and that no further action is necessary.

III. Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 102 / Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 1 and 2 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Imai et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

A complete discussion of the Examiner's rejection is set forth in the Office Action, and is not being repeated here.

In addition, the Examiner states that claims 3-11 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

While not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of objected-to allowable claim 3 (along with intervening claim 2), thereby automatically placing independent claim 1 into condition for allowance, along with dependent claims 4-11. Claims 2 and 3 have been canceled.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

IV. Additional Cited References

Since the remaining references cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject the claims, but have merely been cited to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

V. Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance.

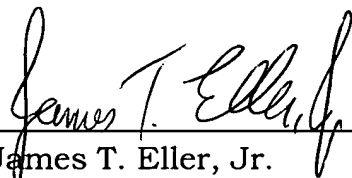
If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone James T. Eller, Jr., Registration No. 39,538, at (703) 205-8000, in the Washington, D.C. area.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment is respectfully requested.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By:  _____
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